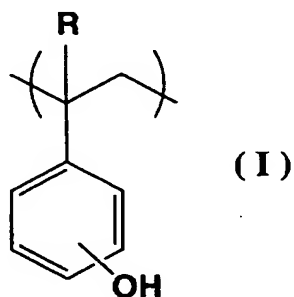


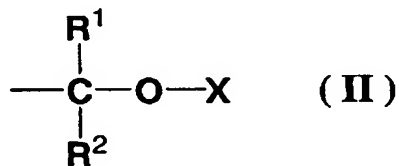
CLAIMS

1. A positive resist composition, comprising a resin component (A) which contains acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups, and exhibits increased alkali solubility
 5 under action of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein

said resin component (A) is a polymer comprising structural units (a1) represented by a general formula (I) shown below, and a portion of hydroxyl groups of said structural units (a1) are protected by substituting hydrogen atoms of said hydroxyl
 10 groups with acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups represented by a general formula (II) shown below:

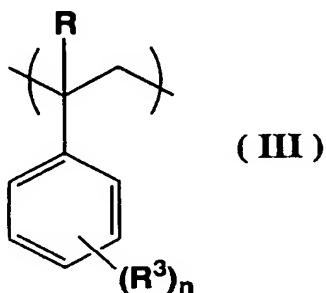


(wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group)



15 (wherein, R¹ represents an alkyl group of 1 to 5 carbon atoms, R² represents an alkyl group of 1 to 5 carbon atoms or a hydrogen atom, and X represents an aliphatic polycyclic group or an aromatic polycyclic hydrocarbon group).

2. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said polymer of said component (A) further comprises structural units (a2) represented by a general formula (III) shown below:



5 (wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group, R³ represents an alkyl group of 1 to 5 carbon atoms, and n represents either 0, or an integer from 1 to 3).

3. A positive resist composition according to claim 2, wherein said component (A) is a mixture of a polymer, which comprises said structural units (a1), and in which a
 10 portion of hydroxyl groups of said structural units (a1) are protected with said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups, and a copolymer, which comprises said structural units (a1) and said structural units (a2), and in which a portion of hydroxyl groups of said structural units (a1) are protected with said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups.

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4. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said group X is an adamantyl group or a naphthyl group.

5. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said group R is a
 20 hydrogen atom.

6. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein a weight average molecular weight of said polymer of said component (A), prior to protection with said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups, is within a range from 2,000 to 30,000.
- 5 7. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein a polydispersity of said polymer of said component (A), prior to protection with said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups, is no more than 2.0.
8. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein a proportion of said
10 structural units (a1) that have been protected with said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting groups, relative to a combined total of all structural units that constitute said polymer of said component (A), is within a range from 5 to 35 mol%.
9. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, further comprising a nitrogen-
15 containing organic compound (D), wherein said component (D) comprises a secondary or tertiary aliphatic amine containing an alkyl group of 7 to 15 carbon atoms.
10. A positive resist composition according to claim 1, which can be used in a method of forming resist patterns comprising an exposure step that uses an electron beam.
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11. A method of forming resist patterns, comprising steps of applying a positive resist composition according to claim 1 to a substrate, conducting a prebake, performing selective exposure, and then conducting post exposure baking (PEB), and performing alkali developing to form a resist pattern.